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## **UGC (EQUITY REGULATIONS): IS THIS REALLY EQUALITY?**

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### **What is the University Grants Commission?**

- 1]. It originated from 1944 recommendation (Sargent Report) (Central advisory body of education at that time).
- 2]. In 1945 initial UGC was formed for Aligarh, Banaras and central Delhi universities.
- 3]. It was formally inaugurated on 28 December 1953 and became a statutory body in 1956 through a parliamentary act. The act was named the UGC Act 1956.

### **Anti-discrimination rules by UGC;**

- 1]. The UGC introduced Anti-ragging rules in 2009 ( bans ragging based on caste, creed, gender and colour).
- 2]. The first dedicated anti-discrimination rules were formed in 2012 under the name of UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions Regulations Act, 2012).
  - 1]. Guidelines provided by the 2012 act;
    - a) Every college and institution must appoint an anti-discrimination officer.
    - b) Establishment of EOC (Equal Opportunity Cells) in every college.
    - c) A 60-day deadline is prescribed for the final disposal of the complaint made,
    - d) It includes provisions to penalise those who make false or malicious claims.

### **UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions Regulation Act, 2026);**

- 1]. Guidelines provided by 2026 act;
  - a) For the first time, OBCs were explicitly included alongside SC, ST, gender and PWD.

- b) Every institution is required to set up EOC.
- c) Time limits shortened, i.e., acknowledgement of complaint within 24 hours and disposal of complaint within 15 working days.

### **Recent SC stay on the legislation**

The Supreme Court of India stayed the new UGC bill. The bench headed by the CJI Surya Kant cited that the bill is 'capable of being misused and is vague, and it is discriminatory towards General category students.

Petition filed by Adv Vishnu Shankar Jain argued the need of clause 3(c). Which states that discrimination could be against particular category students only.

The clause 3(c) could create further divisions in our already segregated society as it completely leaves General category students.

### **Arguments in favour of the new equity regulations**

The OBC category people call this reform a good decision as they were left out of the previous regulations.

The new timelines for the complaint actions ensures a robust response against discriminatory actions.

The liability extended to the VC's and Deans of the college gives a hope for fast action without biases.

Government is ensuring that there will be no discrimination against any class of people and the guidelines are safe.

### **Counter arguments and the scope of biases in the regulations**

The people against the regulations argue that there is a lot of bias present in these guidelines as it purposely excludes the students of general category.

The regulations don't have any prescribed action against the false or malicious complaints filed.

The regulations don't define ragging, hence the general category student now cannot even complain of ragging by seniors if they are from the backward categories.

The bill is defying Article 15 (right to equality) and Article 15 (prohibition of discrimination) of the Indian Constitution.

### **The middle way**

According to the opinion of the SC, the government should make these regulations more explanatory and include the General category in the scope of this bill. This would create a feeling of inclusiveness in the students.

The regulations should not keep anyone out, as they create segregation in our society.

Even after 75 years of independence, why are we moving towards a regressive society which focuses on caste-based segregation? Then what was the purpose of the reservation given to bring the backward class to the level of the General's?

### **Sources**

- 1) The Supreme Court Observer
- 2) Live Law
- 3) India Today
- 4) The Hindu
- 5) The Economic Times.